ABSTRACT

The present invention provides a process for more efficiently producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid ester wherein side reactions due to the α-hydroxycarboxylic acid ester are inhibited or prevented in comparison with prior art production processes.

The invention provides a process for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid ester comprising Steps 1 to 3:

Step 1. reacting, in the presence of oxygen, (i) a 1,2-diol with a 1,2-diol or (ii) a 1,2-diol with an alcohol to obtain a reaction product containing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid ester;

Step 2. separating the α-hydroxycarboxylic acid ester from the reaction product obtained in Step 1 by distillation under reduced pressure; and

Step 3. feeding Step 1 with a mixture obtained by partially or entirely removing water from the reaction product, wherein the mixture contains an unreacted 1,2-diol and/or alcohol.